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ANNUAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONFERENCE AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (32ND, NEW YORK CITY, NOVEMBER 5, 1966).

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THE MAJOR PART OF THIS CONFERENCE REPORT DEVELOPS THE CONFERENCE THEME, "INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING," AS PRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SPEAKER, JOHN B. CARROLL. HIS PAPER TREATS RATE OF LEARNING, SPECIALIZED TRAITS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE APTITUDE (PHONETIC CODING ABILITY, GRAMMATICAL SENSITIVITY, ROTE LEARNING ABILITY, INDUCTIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING ABILITY, AND MOTIVATION), WAYS IN WHICH APTITUDE CAN BE MEASURED AND PREDICTED, AND WAYS IN WHICH APTITUDE TESTS CAN BE USED BY TEACHERS AS AIDS IN ADAPTING INSTRUCTION TO INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. THE REPORT ALSO SUMMARIZES VIEWS PRESENTED BY A PANEL ON THE AVERAGE, SLOW, AND SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS AT THE ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR, AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVELS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM. (AM)

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PROCEEDINGS

Thirty-second Annual Foreign Language Conference at New York University

November 5, 1966

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
School of Education
Division of Foreign Languages
and International Relations Education

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PROCEEDINGS OF
THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONFERENCE
AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 5, 1966

FOREWORD

The Planning Committee of the Thirty-Second Annual Foreign Language Conference at New York University wishes to express its thanks to the more than eight hundred supervisors and teachers of foreign languages who met on November 5 to discuss the theme: "Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning." This theme, like the themes of past conferences, was chosen after careful consultation with the profession at large. The aim of the Conference will continue to be to meet the felt needs of teachers of foreign languages on all instructional levels.

We sincerely hope that we may continue to have the wholehearted cooperation of members of the profession in choosing the themes and speakers for our future conferences. I shall therefore appreciate it if you will write me at New York University to suggest how we may best plan our conferences to coincide with your needs and interests.

EMILIO L. GUERRA
Conference Chairman

INTRODUCTION

The Thirty-second Annual Foreign Language Conference was held under the supervision of the Department of Foreign Languages and International Relations Education, at the Eisner and Lubin Auditorium, Loeb Student Center, 566 West Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012.

The theme of the Conference was: "Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning." The various aspects of this theme were discussed by the principal speaker, John B. Carroll, Professor of Educational Psychology at Harvard University:

1. Foreign language aptitude
2. Measurement and prediction of differences
3. Adaptation of instruction to differences in foreign language aptitude
4. Capacities that make up foreign language aptitude as a whole

Emilio L. Guerra, Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages and International Relations Education, School of Education, New York University, served as Chairman of the Conference.

Dr. Theodore Huebener, Professor of Languages at Fairleigh Dickinson University, was the Conference Moderator.

Milton Schwebel, Associate Dean of the School of Education, New York University, welcomed the audience to the Conference by expressing the hope that the Conference would be a fruitful one. Dr. Schwebel pointed out that "our task is not to classify individuality, but to work energetically at the task of learning how to help our students get the most out of their own individuality."

The members of the discussion panel were:

Leo Benardo, Director of Foreign Languages, Public Schools of the City of New York

Sister Eileen Marie, S.C., Chairman, Foreign Language Department, Cardinal Spellman High School

Henry Epstein, Chairman, Department of Foreign Languages, Astoria Junior High School, Queens, New York

Brother Denis Murphy, F.M.S., Principal, Saint Mary's High School, Manhasset, New York

Loren Shores, Chairman, Foreign Language Department, The High School, Scarsdale, New York

Sidney L. Teitelbaum, Curriculum Coordinator, East Meadow Public Schools, East Meadow, New York

The articles herein printed contain the essence of the Conference.

The Conference Committee consisted of the following:

Anna E. Balakian
Dora S. Bashour
Leo Benardo
Irving H. Berenson
Mendor T. Brunetti
Brother Joseph A. Cussen
Sister Eileen Marie, S.C.
Henry Epstein
Ralph Ghetti
Jacob D. Godin
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David Rudavsky
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Loren Shores
Irma L. Silberberg
Maurice Silver
Wilmarth H. Starr
Herman Slutzkin
Sidney L. Teitelbaum
J. Richard Toven
Israel Walker
Marvin Wasserman

The cooperating associations were:

American Association of Teachers of French
American Association of Teachers of German
American Association of Teachers of Hebrew
American Association of Teachers of Italian
American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages
American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese
Association of Foreign Language Chairmen and Supervisors of Long Island
Association of Foreign Language Chairmen of New York
Foreign Language Education Association
Modern Language Association of America
Modern Language Teachers' Council of the Archdiocese of New York
National Association of Professors of Hebrew
National Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations

New York Classical Club
New York State Federation of Foreign Language Teachers

MARVIN WASSERMAN
Editor of the Proceedings

GREETINGS

Milton Schwebel

On behalf of the faculty of the School of Education, I welcome you warmly and hope that your Thirty-second Annual Foreign Language Conference here at New York University will be a fruitful one.

Any serious discussion of the theme - individual differences - is important in our country today. The ever more significant role into which education is being projected demands that we engage in a continual review of our theories and practices and that we test the validity especially of those concepts that are part of our everyday professional parlance. First among these is "Individual Differences." The term itself connotes respect for the individual, a cherished value and an essential concomitant of a democratic society. Yet a careful reading of the behavioral science literature of the past half century reveals that this concept has been used more against man than for him; that it has denied and inhibited the development of individual talent, rather than encourage and facilitate it. The term has suffered disrepute because it was used to perpetuate inequality and disadvantage. It has been, in fact, the victim of ideological warfare played out in education and psychology, especially in the interpretation of aptitude and ability.

The restoration of its usefulness is possible only by studying the evidence about difference, by understanding the conditions in the development in the child that lead to the emergence of differentiating characteristics. It will be necessary to contrast differences between people that reflect something of the nature of the child in his interacting development in the environment and, on the other hand, those that represent social and economic disadvantage. From the distorted meaning that the term "individual differences" has acquired, we have come to believe that quality and equality in education are incompatible.

The great challenge today is to master the problems of those who, in the past, have had difficulty in learning. In the context of this Conference, the task is to master the problems of those who have had difficulty in learning language, no matter what the cause of the difficulty. Montaigne said, "It is an absolute perfection (and as it were divine), to know how, in all sincerity, to get the very most out of one's own individuality." Our task is not to classify individuality, but to work energetically at the task of learning how to help our students get the most out of their own individuality.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CONFERENCE THEME

Theodore Huebener

In his interesting and stimulating book How to Learn Languages and What Languages to Learn, Professor Mario Pei takes issue with Bloomfield's statement that "there is no special gift for languages."

Pei claims that in language learning three faculties are involved; namely, the ability to hear accurately and to reproduce correctly the sounds heard, the associative faculty which links sounds and their sequences to certain meanings, and personal interest in learning a language, or motivation. These three factors - of which the first two are inborn or inherited - determine the learner's success in acquiring a language. Pei does not by any means rule out those who do not have a good language ear or strong associative faculty; he concedes that motivation is the real determining factor.

The pupil possessing the first two characteristics, that is, a talent for language learning, should offer no problem to the educator. The only questions that arise are: how can we enrich his course and accelerate the pace so that the curriculum is adjusted to his abilities?

If we grant that any normal individual can learn a language if he is properly motivated, one may ask: what about the slow learner? How much time can the school afford to devote to the pupil who is not naturally gifted with language ability? In the FLES program in the New York schools he is not even considered; the program is reserved entirely for intellectually gifted children.

We have mentioned motivation and time; a third important factor is method. Pei in his book states quite categorically: "The question of methodology has relatively little to do with the efficacy of language instruction." This may be true in the case of the self-learner, the autodidactic, but it certainly does not hold for the school and for mass education. In teaching any subject by means of classroom instruction, there must be orderly procedures, psychological development, planned practice, cumulative assignments, and intermittent testing - in other words, method.

For many years educators paid practically no attention to the pupils at either end of the learning scale. They did not have to, for the high school was an academic, college preparatory institution which took only 15% of elementary school graduates. Up to World War I language enrollments in the New York high schools totaled 120%, since many pupils took two languages. During the last few years the average has hovered around 50%.

But the high school changed; within a few years it expanded enormously and was inundated by droves of "nonacademically minded" pupils. A cry arose about the neglected one third in our schools and curriculum makers got busy to make subject matter more palatable for the slow learner. It resulted in thinned out courses in a number of the major subjects - mathematics, science, foreign languages - which were labeled "general." In fact, foreign languages were not even considered necessary and fell to a new low in enrollments.

Suddenly educators realized that even in a democracy leaders had to be trained and that leadership rested with the gifted and intelligent, not with the dull and slow. Quickly courses were organized for the gifted; the special placement program became popular.

Are we now about to see the pendulum swing back, or rather, settle in a more normal, central position? The problem we confront at the moment is: In view of individual differences, how can we provide adequately in foreign language instruction for the normal, the gifted, and the slow?

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

John B. Carroll

No doubt there are individual differences in most kinds of learning situations. For years, psychologists have shown that some cluster of abilities called "intelligence" or "scholastic aptitude" have important relations with overall success in school. From the thousands of studies that have been published on this topic, it appears that school success is to a considerable extent dependent on the student's mastery of his native language, on his ability to reason, and his ability to think in quantitative terms. In addition, it is dependent upon his motivation, or at least the amount of time he actually spends on his studies in relation to the amount of time he would need to spend in order to achieve at his maximum.

Foreign languages are becoming ever more important in most school curricula. Two questions can be raised: Are individual differences in foreign language learning dependent on the same abilities as other school subjects? Are students motivated to study foreign languages in the same way that they are motivated to study other school subjects? In general, the research that I have done suggests that the answers to these questions are in the negative. Foreign language learning is something special: success in learning depends on a somewhat different set of abilities than other school subjects, and students are not motivated to study foreign languages in the same way that they are motivated to study other school subjects. In short, individual differences in foreign language learning are not the same as individual differences in the learning of most other school subjects. Therefore we will have to treat them separately. The case of foreign languages is somewhat similar to the case of music: everybody knows that musical ability is something rather special, musical talent does not automatically go along with high intelligence, and musical talent can indeed be found in some people who have only meager aptitudes for success in school in general. In the same way, talent for foreign languages does not automatically accompany high intelligence, and it may appear in some individuals who are not otherwise very successful in school. I am not suggesting, of course, that musical talent and foreign language talents are the same; in fact, I think that in general they are very different, contrary to some fairly widely held opinions. Many persons who combine musical and foreign language talents do exist, but from a statistical point of view this is a coincidence.

The proposition that there are individual differences in foreign language learning is not exactly self-evident, but it is abundantly supported by the common experience of teachers. Let us limit ourselves to the case of the person who is learning a foreign language at some time beyond the time he learns his native language. The matter of individual differences in the learning of the native language has interesting but

different problems that will not concern us here. But if we take groups of children, say in the third grade, or in the seventh grade, or at the high school level, and particularly if we take groups of college students or adults, we find wide individual differences in the success they have in learning a foreign language - even if they are equally motivated and are given the best kind of instruction we know how to give.

Conceptually, I find it desirable to think of these individual differences as differences in the rate at which the person can acquire the foreign language. It is not an accident that we often speak of some persons as fast learners and others as slow learners. For if we can allow each person to learn at his own rate, we will find that the rates of learning do vary widely. In fact, the evidence suggests that rates of learning are distributed like many other human traits, that is, according to so-called "normal," bell-shaped frequency distribution. The majority of people learn at more or less average rates, while there are some who learn either much faster or much slower than the average. Up at the top of the distribution are a few people who may be called "geniuses" at learning foreign languages; these are the people we meet once in a while who seem to be able to acquire a foreign language almost overnight. At the bottom of the distribution are a few people who are virtual "idiots" as far as learning foreign languages is concerned. They may be brilliant in something else, like mathematics or poetry writing, but one may expect them never to get far in foreign language learning.

Several further observations may be made at this point. First, an individual's rate of foreign language learning is more or less constant: if he is a slow learner, he is slow at the beginning of foreign language study and also he is slow later on. It is rare that one observes a slow learner actually pick up speed, and if one does, it may be because of some extraneous factor, such as a suddenly increased amount of motivation and effort; in this case, the person was probably not a slow learner after all. Second, rates of learning, for a given individual, are approximately the same regardless of what language he is studying - aside from the inherent differences in the difficulty of languages that apply to all learners. That is, a person who is slow in learning French will be expected to be slow, relative to other learners, in learning any other language, whether it is Spanish (which is sometimes erroneously supposed to be an "easy" language for Americans) or Russian (which is usually somewhat harder for Americans to learn than some other languages). Third, rates of learning probably do not change much over the course of one's life. The evidence for this is slim, actually, but common observation suggests that it may be true. Fourth, we do not know how to change an individual's characteristic rate of foreign language learning. Little research has been done on this question, unfortunately, but I will have some suggestions about it later on.

These individual differences in rate of foreign language learning may be spoken of as differences in foreign language aptitude, but in talking about foreign language aptitude I hope you will not infer that it corresponds to some bump on the head or some way in which the brain is constructed that causes good or poor learning. Exactly what foreign language aptitude is, in physiological terms, is a mystery. I don't know whether any aspect of it is inherited, or what aspects of it are learned. There is a little evidence to suggest that certain aspects of it are indeed influenced by heredity, but this is very problematical. I would not want to leave the impression that foreign language aptitude is, on the whole, inherited. It may have some basis in very early learning on the part of the young child. In any case, we have to take the fact of individual differences in foreign language learning as a "given." There are three things we can do about these differences. The remainder of this talk will discuss them.

The first thing we can do about individual differences in foreign language learning is to try to measure and predict these differences before the person actually undertakes foreign language study. I have spent a good deal of time doing research to make this possible, and, as you may know, I have been able to develop a practical measuring instrument called the Modern Language Aptitude Test. This instrument is designed for testing persons from the ninth grade up through adulthood, but it can also be used with the brighter students of the seventh and eighth grades. A version of the test now in preparation is designed for elementary school children in the third to the sixth grades. The senior form of the test has been validated on thousands of cases, and is being used widely. I am not alone in the endeavor to make tests to predict rates of foreign language learning: Paul Pimsleur has just published a test called the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery, based on somewhat the same principles as mine but designed for children in the seventh to twelfth grades. There are one or two other foreign language aptitude tests either on the market or restricted to use in certain organizations like the Army. The tests are not all equal in validity, but the very fact that it has been possible to construct and validate them seems to prove that differences in foreign language aptitude can be measured and predicted.

Furthermore, the nature of the tests gives quite a few leads as to the nature of foreign language aptitude, at least its psychological components. In constructing my elementary school version of the MLAT, I was surprised to find that the kinds of tests that proved most valid and useful were very similar to the kinds that had proved most valid and useful at the upper level.

Let me emphasize at this point that I believe foreign language aptitude is complex - that it depends on a number of rather separate and specialized traits of the language learner. Of course, rate is one entity - unless you try to analyze foreign language learning at an almost microscopic

level of detail, on the whole the individual progresses fast or slow according to the net sum of his various language aptitudes. Nevertheless, it is interesting to examine the separate capacities that make up foreign language aptitude as a whole and that go into the prediction of the rate at which the learner will progress. I have identified four main abilities of this sort.

The first of these is something that probably has no parallel or counterpart in intelligence testing, and I always find it difficult to explain, perhaps because I am still not quite sure what it is, even though I can measure it in a number of different ways. It is something I have been calling phonetic coding ability, but before you draw too much out of that phrase let me try to explain. Basically, it seems to be the person's ability to apprehend a particular speech sound or combination of sounds and, at some later time, identify it, recognize it, or recall it as different from some other sound or combination of sounds. Phonetic coding ability is phonetic because so far as I know it applied only to stimuli that can be considered as speech sounds. It does not, for example, apply to the apprehension and recall of groups of spoken digits, as in the usual memory span test, and certainly it does not seem to apply in the case of materials that can be presented and remembered in purely visual terms, like alphabetic letters. Phonetic coding ability has to do with coding because I imagine that the person who is good at this ability is somehow able to "tag" or "code" the speech stimulus in the process of storing it in his memory. If you don't want to accept this aspect of my characterization, perhaps you will be satisfied if I call it simply phonetic memory ability. You can see how important such an ability is in learning a foreign language. In the early stages, one has to learn to recognize and also pronounce a series of foreign sounds, and this can be done best by a person who is inherently good at recognizing and remembering particular speech sounds. At later stages, one has to recognize and remember whole groups of sounds; for the person who is good at phonetic coding, perhaps these sounds are apprehended as single impressions, i.e., as Gestalten. This ability can be measured in a number of ways. Perhaps one of the best ways is to use a test that has to be administered individually: we pronounce a nonsense syllable or two, or perhaps a short phrase in a foreign language, and then give the subject a little mental arithmetic to do for about ten seconds before he is asked to repeat the sounds that he has heard. The delay is inserted in this test to make it necessary for the subject to store in memory the sounds he has heard; he is not allowed to repeat them on a purely imitative basis. This test seems to work well in the few instances when I have tried it, but it is of no use if the requirement is for group testing. We have to contrive various dodges and subterfuges to make this ability show itself in a group test. One such dodge is to make the individual learn a new set of printed symbols for the sounds of his own language; I have tried having the subject learn a completely new alphabet, like the Devanagari alphabet used in Sanskrit and Hindi, but the best expedient seems to be to make him learn a new phonetic transcription

using mainly the Roman alphabet. This sort of test is administered as a group test by a tape recording (the Phonetic Script Test, Part II of the MLAT). Another dodge is to see whether the individual has acquired ready responses to phonetic-orthographic stimuli in his native language: in my Spelling Clues test, the individual has to recognize very rapidly the words represented by somewhat abbreviated, partially phonetic spellings of English words. There are still other ways of measuring phonetic memory, enough to suggest that it is an ability of wide yet subtle importance in dealing with language stimuli.

A second ability of major importance in learning foreign languages is what I have called grammatical sensitivity. Fundamentally, it is the ability to recognize - that is, be aware of - the grammatical functions of words and other grammatical elements in sentences, even in one's native language. Now to be sure, everybody who speaks English as a native language has somehow acquired, subconsciously, some kind of competence with the grammar of that language, in the sense that he automatically uses the syntax of his language in such a way as to create understandable sentences. But not everybody, it seems, can bring this automatic competence to the level of awareness. Even linguists have trouble writing the grammar of their own language, let alone other languages. Even though nearly everybody has been exposed to training in formal grammar at one or more stages of his school career, not everybody can perform certain linguistic tasks that depend upon his perceiving grammatical functions and relationships. Even training in formal grammar does not seem to "cut through" this inability. In one good test of grammatical sensitivity, used in my MLAT, the student has to find words or phrases that have similar grammatical functions in two different sentences. For example, if I give you two sentences: John gave Mary an apple, and Tom's brother interviewed Mr. Smith last Friday, the task is to find what word or words in the second sentence have a function that parallels that of apple in the first sentence. To do this, the subject does not have to know any terminology of formal grammar. He does, however, have to be able to make a conscious analysis of the grammar of the two sentences. Again, it is easy to see how such an ability would be relevant in foreign language learning, no matter what role grammar plays in the instruction, because the student does have to work out some sort of grammatical analysis of the foreign language he is learning.

A third major component of foreign language aptitude is another kind of memory ability - rote learning ability for the meanings of foreign language words and expressions. It is often noticed, in studies of paired-associate learning in experimental psychology, that students differ widely in their ability to acquire the meanings of a list of nonsense syllables in a short time; experimental psychologists find that back of this ability seems to lie some kind of facility for making use of the associations that one has for the things that are to be connected. Apparently this sort of ability comes into play in learning a foreign language. That is, one of

the problems the learner has is that of connecting the foreign words and phrases with meanings and concepts he has already acquired. This is true regardless of how a foreign language vocabulary is taught. Some foreign language teachers believe that vocabulary should be taught only in context, and they advise students to avoid the use of vocabulary lists, flashcards, and the like. Perhaps this advice is wise - I am not persuaded that it is always wise, but even when vocabulary is learned in context, that is, in the course of learning dialogues or reading prose passages, there is still a problem of connecting the arbitrary foreign language sound patterns with meanings of some sort. We can rather easily test this ability by giving the student a short vocabulary list of foreign words and their meanings, then testing him on his retention after a very short time.

A fourth major component of foreign language ability is inductive language learning ability. It can be best measured by giving the subject a series of sentences in a foreign language (which could be an artificial one) constructed and sequenced in such a way that it is possible to work out their grammar. My colleague in the development of MLAT, Stanley Sapon, worked out such a test, given with film strip, tape recorder, and test booklet. In fact, he attempted to model the test after the most highly-approved audio-lingual teaching procedures. Some subjects picked up the grammar of his artificial language "Tem-Tem" very readily, by noticing the changes in words that accompanied changes in grammatical meanings, all well illustrated in changes in the pictures that accompanied the sentences spoken on tape. Others did not seem to understand how to work out the grammar of Tem-Tem; in fact, perhaps they did not understand how a language is put together. Although the scores on this test were highly predictive of success in learning a real language, such as Chinese, we could not include the test in the commercial battery because it took too much time and equipment to give it. At any rate, it did provide us with insight as to one of the components of foreign language aptitude.

We did not attempt to measure motivation for foreign language study, but this is an important variable in foreign language study. It affects mainly the amount of time that the individual is willing to spend in practicing and learning. The critical variable, I say, is the time the individual is willing to spend in learning; it does not matter very much how he is motivated - whether to get good grades or to learn the language for some utilitarian purpose he has in mind. Pimsleur, in his language aptitude battery, asks the student to rate his interest in foreign language, and finds that this is indeed one of the valid predictors of success. Sapon and I did not include this variable in the test score because of the possibility that the individual would deceive either hinself or the examiner as to his true motivations.

Sometimes language aptitude tests such as mine have been criticized because they do not present, it is claimed, good "models" of language learning procedures. For example, the rote memory type of vocabulary learning test is criticized because it is not typical of the way students are advised to learn foreign language vocabulary. In reply, I would first point out that an aptitude test is not necessarily designed, and does not have to be designed, as a model learning situation. The purpose of an aptitude test is to measure as reliably as possible, and in the shortest time possible, the abilities and traits that underlie success in learning a foreign language. Doing this has nothing to do with presenting good models of language learning procedures. In fact, it is even possible that a test that concentrated on providing good models of language learning would fail to capture and measure the abilities that are normally relevant in language learning.

Now, I said that there are three things one can do about foreign language aptitude. I have discussed ways of measuring and predicting it. The second thing one can do about it is to try to adapt instruction to differences in foreign language aptitude. There are various ways of doing this. The most obvious one is to select only individuals with rather high language aptitude and teach only <u>them</u>; or one could move the cutting point down on the scale and use the test mainly to screen out the students who have a high likelihood of failure. This is the way the test is sometimes used, either by schools, or by organizations such as the Air Force, the Peace Corps, or the Foreign Service, where failure in foreign language training is costly both to the individual and to the organization. Use of the test as a selection device depends, then, on the practical situation and also to some extent on one's educational objectives and philosophy. Some would say that since the test is not perfectly accurate in identifying those who will fail, everybody should be given a chance to try learning a foreign language. I will grant, as a matter of fact, that despite the high validity of the test in predicting rate of learning in a variety of situations, probably the best indicator of success in learning is a practical tryout of learning - provided the student is well motivated and he really is given sufficiently good instruction over a long enough period to allow his strengths and weaknesses to show themselves.

If the test is not used as a selection device, it can often be used as a guidance instrument, that is, as a measure that will show the individual with reasonable accuracy what his chances are of making good in foreign language study. Then the decision as to whether to study a foreign language is up to the individual. If the test shows that he has poor chances of being successful, but he still wants to try, he should by all means be given the opportunity to try.

A related issue, by the way, has to do with the use of the test as a way of "excusing" a student from a language requirement. Although the test has been used in this way in some colleges, I do not recommend its

use for this purpose except with certain qualifications. For one thing, it is admitted that the test is not perfectly valid; it occasionally makes mistakes, for one reason or another. Second, a student could easily malinger on this test, i.e., just not try as hard as he could. I would recommend, rather, that the test be used as a diagnostic instrument. It could be given to a student who is failing his foreign language study: if he does well on the test, he would certainly be required to stay with his foreign language requirement. If he does poorly on the test, in conjunction with failing in his foreign language courses, the decision as to whether he should be excused from foreign language study would have to be based on a sensitive clinical judgment about how well motivated he was in taking the test, how well motivated he is in foreign language study, and other factors.

The chief way in which a foreign language aptitude test could be used in normal situations, it seems to me, is as a predictor of the rate at which the individual could successfully master a foreign language. It would therefore be used as a means of setting up sections that would go at different rates, or it could be used as a means of individualizing instruction so that even within a given class some students would be allowed to go ahead much faster than the average student, and other students would be allowed to progress much more slowly than the average. Highly apt students can be given advanced tapes and workbook material to study by themselves, with occasional help from the teacher, and under certain circumstances they might be able to skip over a semester or a quarter and be placed in a more advanced section than normal. Slow students could be given extra help, or programmed instruction materials that would allow them to work very slowly; they might be allowed to take a year to cover the ground normally covered in a semester. The remaining students would constitute the majority of students and they would all progress at approximately the same rate. Such a system, or something like it, would prevent what so often occurs - namely, the situation where the progress of a class is determined by the learning rates of its slowest members. Likewise, it would allow the language learning "geniuses" to capitalize on their gift. Some of these could easily complete a three-year course in two years or even less. I have had reports from teachers that sectioning students by ability in foreign language, whether measured by an aptitude test or on the basis of past performance, makes language teaching much more successful for the students and pleasant for the teacher. Of course, in small schools where there are limited possibilities for sectioning this plan has some administrative complications. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the obstacles can be overcome.

A third way in which a foreign language aptitude test can be used has already been touched on - as a diagnostic instrument. I cannot claim that it has been deliberately designed for this purpose, and in fact, the diagnostic use of the test is somewhat limited by the fact that the subtests are somewhat short and limited in reliability. Nevertheless, I suggest that attempts be made to use it in this way. I have indicated some of the

aspects of foreign language aptitude that we have tried to measure with the MLAT; often the pattern of scores that an individual makes on this test will indicate where specific weaknesses lie. For example, a person who makes relatively low scores on those parts of the test measuring phonetic memory may need special help in learning to remember foreign sounds and their combination; a person who makes a relatively low score on the Words in Sentences test may need special help in learning foreign language grammar; and a person who does relatively poorly on the last test, the one of rote memory for vocabulary, may need special help in finding devices to help him remember foreign language vocabulary. It is even possible that special help given to an individual in the light of weaknesses shown on an aptitude test will, in the long run, improve his foreign language aptitude and thus accelerate his rate of progress. This is an area where research is much needed.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the area of foreign language training is a particularly promising one for taking account of individual differences in a meaningful way. Aptitude can be more easily and accurately measured than in some other areas of the curriculum, and the content of foreign language courses naturally grades itself in difficulty and complexity. I would not claim that adapting instruction to individual differences will make it possible for every student to be equally successful in the end, but I do think that it might at least promote greater acceptance of the foreign language program.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Leo Benardo

The traditional junior high school was designed to develop exploratory programs for pupils of varying abilities. For many years it met with extraordinary success in a number of subject areas, including foreign languages. Pupils often received a brief introduction of one or more languages in grade 8 so that they could then make a reasonable selection of foreign language in grade 9.

Unfortunately, little attention was given to the student who was not academically talented. The foreign language program in most junior high schools served the bright child, the one who read well in his native tongue, the one who was highly motivated to pursue an academic course.

Little attention was given to the pupil whose academic career through grade 8 had been spotty, whose opportunities for college entrance were deemed, at best, limited, or whose needs seemed to be those either of the commercial or the vocational worlds. Foreign language teachers were expected to develop a program for the scholarly youngster, and so only one program seemed sufficient.

Success even in this program varied. Some youngsters moved smoothly on to the higher sequences offered in the senior high school and some, experiencing failure in the grade 9 program, dropped the language begun in the junior high school, either to begin again when they reached the senior high school or to lose contact with foreign language forever.

With a re-thinking of foreign language needs in the late 1950's, and with a desire to start instruction earlier, pupils were directed into language instruction in grade 7. Here too, the emphasis was on the academically talented, for in many school systems either general achievement or, specifically, success in reading the native tongue were used as guides for pupil selection in the grade 7 program.

For a while excitement reigned. The parents were delighted, for foreign language was a status symbol. The pupils were delighted because their entry to the junior high school meant the beginning of a new subject area - a strange and startling one.

Shunted aside, however, were those pupils who, for a variety of reasons, had met with only minimal academic success in the elementary school, or who, in the opinion of school supervisors or guidance counselors, needed instruction in the basic curriculum areas. Foreign language for these pupils, it was said, would be solely a frill. The major

responsibility of the schools, they continued, is to develop sound knowledge in communication in the pupils' native tongue. Until such knowledge was firm, foreign language could wait.

Interestingly enough, even the program for the bright gave little attention to individual differences. It was simply assumed that all reasonably bright children could learn a foreign language and that they could all learn it at approximately the same rate.

Pupils were now offered two levels of foreign language instruction in the junior high school, with one level comprising grades 7 and 8, and the other level, grade 9. Perhaps the only modification in this entire picture occurred at the conclusion of grade 8, when pupils who had experienced failure in the first two years of instruction were permitted to start language again in grade 9, or where some pupils who were denied foreign language in grade 7 were finally "given a crack" at a foreign language course in grade 9, if their scholarship level in grade 8 permitted it.

These screenings were at best arbitrary. How much had research really taught us about adequate prognosis for success in the study of a foreign language? What about the late academic bloomer who could develop enormous success in foreign language, had he been given a good teacher and an exciting course? What right had we to screen out, sometimes forever, pupils who, for a variety of reasons, did poorly in subject areas in their native tongue? Is it not possible that a pupil who reads poorly in English can learn to understand or speak or even read with some reasonable facility in a foreign language?

The recently planned reorganization of the junior high school in New York City and its proposed movement to the intermediate school has brought about a re-thinking of these very issues. Pupils in large numbers are now leaving the elementary or primary school at the end of either grade 4 or grade 5. Attempts are now being made to give every pupil his "place in the foreign language sun."

In New York City, fourteen pilot intermediate schools are offering foreign language instruction to all pupils who enter them, eliminating any "ability screening" in either reading in English or in general scholarship. The initial reactions have been entirely favorable. Parents who had previously complained about a kind of academic discrimination against pupils who had not been doing well in the other areas are now encouraged by the fact that their youngsters have a chance to begin a whole new area of communication, without being pilloried for lack of success in other areas.

The children are excited because here too, for the first time, they are not being segregated into classes for the academically talented who are given foreign language, or into classes for the academically slow who do not have foreign language.

This, however, is hardly the end of the line. Certain basic questions still need to be resolved and new programs still must be developed:

1. How do we break through the lock-step of foreign language instruction and not only permit but foster progress at a pupil's own rate? Is it not feasible for some pupils to spend four years of foreign language instruction in the intermediate school, developing a sound background in depth of Level I alone? What are we to do with the pupils whose motivation is keen, whose rate of learning is high, and who are ready to move on to higher levels of learning in the intermediate school program?

2. What are the implications of this new program for the total sequence of foreign language learning? How can the senior high school provide for those youngsters who move ahead slowly but adequately, and at the same time, provide for those who move very rapidly and with great success?

3. What kinds of groupings will be most successful in the intermediate school to foster movement at individual rates? Can the language laboratory serve in this area? Will large group instruction sometimes be not only possible but preferred? How much small group instruction will be necessary? What changes of material are required?

4. Is a tracking system workable in the intermediate school? If pupils are assigned to foreign language tracks for slower and brighter learners, will the mortality rate among foreign language learners decline and will we be able to maintain higher motivation through the intermediate school years and on into the senior high school?

5. How are we to evaluate such a language program? What adaptations in tests need to be made? What will we consider adequate progress in the foreign language skills?

These are questions which at first may seem unanswerable, but to which we must address ourselves if our intermediate school foreign language program is to have any meaning.

Careful research must be put into motion now to help us find answers in these crucial areas. Of primary importance is the open mind and the open "foreign language heart" that will be willing to suggest that all children can be offered foreign language, that most of them can learn to like it, and that many will even be successful!

THE VERY SUCCESSFUL STUDENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Sister Eileen Marie, S.C.

The very successful student in the foreign language classroom is at once the joy of, the challenge to, and even at times the despair of his teacher. Linguistically gifted, his ears easily attuned to the sound of the target languages, he quickly picks up new vocabulary, handles pronunciation and intonation with ease, composes with facility and grammatical accuracy according to his progress. Of course, within this grouping of very successful students may be classified those who respond with greater ease in one area rather than another. Thus, we may have the student who is more aurally than visually oriented and vice versa. But, nonetheless, this student is generally eager, alert, even vivacious in his response. And so, he is a joy to have in the classroom situation where his quick, bright manner encourages the teacher to continue his efforts. More than the joy he gives to his teacher is the challenge he becomes. The teacher must be ready to match his zest for new work - open new ways of expressing himself, offer more complete explanations of the reasons behind so many constructions used in the new language that differ often very radically from those of his own tongue, provide leading material that can foster the interest and development of the student. Lacking the ability to increase his students' incentive for language learning, the teacher may discover that the very successful student will become his despair and may, in a certain way, constitute a threat to the teacher's own position in the classroom situation.

Just how can the very successful student be encouraged to become more so - especially if he is in a heterogeneous grouping as often happens in the smaller school? How can his talent for language learning be used to the utmost? This is the problem posed for the alert teacher, a problem which becomes for him a spur to new and more creative means of language teaching. In solving it, he would do well - this is possible with students of a second language and more advanced levels of language learning - to identify the strong and weak points of his group. For example, there are those students who may have a quick and retentive memory for words as contrasted with those whose chief facility is picking up and using correct speech patterns. With careful planning he can use these students as aides in the various facets of the language learning process, thus giving them an opportunity to shine in the areas of their greatest strength.

On the first level, for example, the student whose ear differentiates the nuances in sound and who quickly picks up the correct oral expression in the foreign language can be of invaluable assistance in helping the other students to make the distinction in sound. It is he who

can be called on soonest to render the newly learned phrase, to repeat it until others have picked it up correctly. He can get the class off to a good start by engaging in dialogue, first with the teacher, then with the other students.

As the class moves into greater concentration on reading, it is very often the visually oriented student who can explain a new word in the light of vocabulary already learned. In oral reading, the student who is successful in correct intonation and pronunciation can become an incentive to others in the class to follow his efforts in order to achieve similar results.

The original, descriptive, or humorous way in which the successful foreign language student can express himself in writing can often add zip to what might otherwise be a dull class session. Composition, whether free or directed, can be a bugbear, a tiresome chore for many otherwise interested students. Yet, they should be a challenging way for the good pupil to prove his ability to express himself well and correctly in the target language. Therefore, the alert teacher will know how to utilize this factor in a way to stimulate this student to ever greater efforts by calling on him to write a particularly well-turned phrase or sentence on the board for others to examine and adapt. Where the entire development of a particular theme has been especially well done, the teacher can make excellent use of the overhead projector to allow the class to benefit, not only from hearing the composition read, but from the slower, more careful study, sentence by sentence. In all these means of utilizing the very successful student as an aid to both class- and self-stimulus, the prudent teacher will carefully avoid any hint of favoritism especially by his seemingly casual manner of accepting the talents of the language-oriented student and by his constant encouragement of every effort of those less gifted linguistically.

Obviously, the better student can also be encouraged to read books, newspapers, and magazines in the foreign language and to bring into the class reports, résumés, and clippings which would be of interest and enjoyment to the group.

The language teacher must be aware of the future needs of his students in the foreign language and prepare realistically to meet them. Where the percentage of students continuing studies is high, where the promise of future graduate study exists, the teacher must be aware of the student using the foreign language as a tool to research where reading, vocabulary, and comprehension of grammatical forms rank high. Where the possibility of travel abroad is present, the teacher must prepare the student to use the language in conversational patterns. Hopefully, the expert language teacher will accomplish both these ends regardless of the classroom situation.

Where the teacher does not take into consideration the special talent of the student who learns languages with ease and rapidity, he is faced with the problem of gradual loss of interest and, if that is aggravated sufficiently, with a discipline problem. The teacher must plan to use to the utmost the individual gifts of the talented student and offer to this pupil the challenge and the variety of approach that will sustain interest and evoke the desire to continue work on the student's own time.

TEACHING THE SLOW LEARNER

Henry Epstein

In his most informative talk, Mr. Benardo has referred to the pilot intermediate schools that are now offering foreign language instruction. In addition, many interesting and challenging questions have been posed, questions to which I do not pretend to have the answers. Since, however, I am deeply involved in the intermediate school foreign language program, I should like to examine with you the language instruction that we at I.S. 126 are offering our students.

Last year, it must be noted, ability screening did take place, and those pupils who were reading on grade level were programmed for foreign language instruction. Of the school's twelve fifth grade classes, eight classes, approximately two hundred boys and girls, reading below grade level, received no foreign language exposure whatsoever. These non-language students were what we considered our slower children, our slow learners. This year, however, in keeping with the official policy of the Bureau of Foreign Languages, all students, reading score notwithstanding, are studying a foreign language.

The problem at I.S. 126 is a special one indeed. Although we did desire to group our children heterogeneously, our current sixth graders who were rejected and barred from language work in the fifth grade, are now, in reality, in classes with children of their own academic level. Homogeneity, which we had hoped to avoid, does exist in our school. There are eight such classes consisting of homogeneously grouped slow learners.

May I depart for a moment from the situation at 126 and refer to the foreign language curriculum bulletin in which there are set forth the practices, characteristics, and general criteria for evaluating an effective language program. I should like to cite from that section that delineates the attitudes and activities that we might ideally expect of the pupil in the classroom:

1. The students are interested and attentive throughout the class period.

2. The students all participate in the lesson spontaneously.

3. The students communicate actively with one another in French or Spanish.

Let us ponder these statements and ask ourselves in all candor whether the slow pupil, encountering great difficulties, is truly interested

in the activities of the class. Is he attentive during the presentation of the lesson? Does he participate actively or perhaps even occasionally? Does he communicate at all with his classmates in the foreign tongue?

If I were to rely solely upon personal past experience, I would reply negatively to the above questions. More often than not, the slow child would soon lose interest, become increasingly bored, and present a serious disciplinary problem. As a result of having endured his share of futility, frustration, and failure, might he not be expected to be restless, inattentive, and uninterested in the foreign language classroom as well?

Return with me, if you will, to I.S. 126. For those of us who have always accepted the forty minute period as the optimum time unit for classroom instruction, an exciting innovation must be noted immediately. Our sixth graders attend foreign language classes for twenty minute sessions, four times a week. The advantage to the slow child is obvious. I am delighted to state that the slow learner, exposed to shorter units of meaningful and purposeful work, has to date maintained a high level of interest and attention. Would such be the case, we might ask, if language exposure were limited to the conventional forty minute period, twice a week? I personally have observed children entering the language classroom eager and enthusiastic to learn. Their interest is sustained until the very end of the twenty minute session. What I find even more remarkable is that on occasion pupils have expressed regret that they were unable to remain longer for additional language instruction.

To provide our pupils with every possible advantage, class size has been kept to an absolute minimum. Whereas the maximum class size in normal situations may be as high as 34, 126 registers have been reduced to 23 or 24 pupils.

Although the methodology employed with slow pupils is basically much the same as that used with average pupils, the difference does lie in an attitude, an approach, an understanding on the part of the instructor. The difference exists, furthermore, in the pace and tempo of the lesson, the variety of classroom activities, and the materials used.

In working with slow learners, we've been very successful with the use of filmstrips, display charts, records, pictures, and the like. I had hoped to report in glowing terms the fact that the children were experiencing great satisfaction with the language laboratory. However, the console arrived but recently and should be installed shortly. I am confident that the pupils will profit immeasurably once the laboratory is in full operation.

There cannot be any doubt whatsoever that the key to the entire program of teaching slow learners is the teacher who is willing to work

hard, extremely hard. He must be convinced of the importance, the worthwhileness, and the satisfaction of teaching the slower child. It is essential that the teacher approach his work without feeling that he is being disciplined by the administration, or being discriminated against, or that such teaching is an unpleasant duty.

In conclusion, I should like to quote from an article that recently appeared in an issue of High Points. In referring to the book Teaching the Slow Learner by the late Professor Featherstone of Columbia University, the author of the High Points article emphasizes the need for patience and understanding on the part of the teacher:

> Instead of tolerating him as a necessary nuisance - as a cross to be borne - the teacher must be able to accept him for what he is and believe that he has a right to the best and most conscientious guidance and instruction that can be devised.

THE AVERAGE LEARNER

Brother Denis Murphy, F.M.S.

In the educational supermarket of our present school systems, many products are clamoring for the attention of the shoppers, in this case the pupils. The sciences and mathematics, the social studies, as well as English, and business subjects, are all attractively packaged to catch the eye of the customers. Caveat emptor is an old refrain that still applies to shoppers, whether they are housewives looking for a new brand of detergent or students seeking an education. Too often young people read the back of the package before they see what is in the box. As language teachers, we should realize the great natural appeal our product has. Communicating in a foreign language is as alluring to a student as the newest cereal box offer of a secret code ring is to a tiny tot.

Learning to speak a foreign tongue can and should be a rewarding experience for a youngster. What a crime it would be to reduce this new experience to the hack routine of poorly translated selections of stilted prose. Language is the means of communication between peoples, and the average student - average in both ability and interest - should learn to speak the language being taught. Of course, the age of the student will have a direct bearing on the method and content of our teaching. Level I will not be taught exactly the same way to junior high school and senior high school pupils. An experienced teacher will know how to use the recitation of short, easily understood poems or declamations as a means of stimulating interest in his classes. What a lift to a student's ego to hear himself declaiming in a foreign language, even if this declamation is quite short! He is communicating with his classmates; he is, in truth, speaking a foreign language.

We must be realistic about our teaching of a foreign tongue. No great miracles will be accomplished over night. If possible (and this will vary greatly from school system to school system) the students should have a six-year sequence in a foreign language. As a minimum requirement, I believe that students who start a foreign language in elementary school should be made to study the language for at least four years. Those who begin a foreign language in the high school should study that language for at least three years. If possible, students who study a foreign language exclusively on the high school level should try to cover the three levels in four years. I have seen this done in our own schools and find that an average student - properly motivated - can do this easily.

What about the students who don't have an aptitude or inclination to actively discuss in a foreign language? We need an intensive reading course in our foreign language departments to cater to these students. After having had a minimum of three years with much emphasis on the

audio-lingual phases of teaching foreign languages, a student might very well prosper much more from this intensive reading course. The course should rely heavily on modern plays, as the language will be much more natural than that used in prose works. In addition, such plays are read rapidly, which is a great help in maintaining the students' interest. This reading course could also be taken by those who are completing a four to six-year sequence of the audio-lingual approach. It would be a good vocabulary builder for such students. I do not see any reason why students in the eleventh or twelfth year should have to take a course in which they have no interest simply to round out their schedule. I have found over the years that average students can profit greatly from such a reading course.

The program outlined above will depend on the teachers available. Good and interested students are formed by good and interested teachers. Surely, at the outset, we will need a great deal of patience. Classes must be carefully prepared and thoroughly taught - there are no shortcuts to being a good teacher. We must be careful not to assume too much; our explanations must be concise, thorough, and interesting. Our tests must synthesize our teaching. They must bring the most important points to the attention of the pupils.

In addition to the educational products we can give our students, we can also give them green stamps. The latter will be redeemable for an appreciation, sympathy, understanding, and closeness to the peoples of the countries where the foreign language is spoken. In this way, our teaching will be a real educational experience for our students. With such a great opportunity before us, what a shame it would be to short-change our students!

THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Loren W. Shores

The Foreign Language Conference of New York University has once again chosen a theme which challenges the mind, stimulates discussion, and perhaps will open a few doors.

This is no isolated theme. The success of the total language program - its methods, its materials, its personnel are all involved. At the heart of the matter is the individual - his interests, potential or actual - his ability, known or unknown.

From the moment the student enters the high school, equipped in many cases with an excellent language background and at other times with a poorly articulated, ineffective, and frustrated sense of accomplishment, he is beginning that final stretch before college. His success will depend not so much on his placement and his past record as on the teacher who has now accepted that responsibility of reaching the individual - inspiring him, motivating him to independent study and, above all, recognizing and strengthening his weaknesses. The skills which he may have obtained must now find new outlets for deeper expression and a sense of more significant gain.

If he must repeat a year or start all over again let's hope that the approach or at least the materials will be different. What a tragedy if any student beginning a language does not eventually read some good literature in that tongue, be able to converse a little on some controversial subject, and perhaps even write something original!

As a representative of Scarsdale High School I should like to be able to speak as a true panaceist. It can't be done. We leave the words of absolutes to the theorists and the publishing houses. What we do seek to do is constantly ask questions, experiment, and attempt to evaluate the success of each course, new or old.

Scarsdale provides a 9th through 12th grade curriculum for 1700 students. The enrollment in foreign languages is about 105 percent. Many students take two or more languages. Paradoxically, though foreign language courses are purely elective it is assumed that 99 percent of those enrolled in such courses will go on to some type of college that will require foreign language study background. The program is challenging and rewarding. It is extensive. It improves as our teachers get out and find what other school systems are doing. Several schools have been more successful than we in providing modified courses for the marginal students.

All students in the junior high school begin either French or Spanish in the 6th grade. This provides a possible seven-year sequence. Latin may be begun in the 8th grade. The study of Russian is open to 9th through 12th grade students and presently provides a three-year sequence. Hebrew is studied by several students at the various synagogues and a regents examination is administered at the High School each year. Efforts to introduce Chinese have not been successful but we see some promise in this area. Regular classes meet four times a week.

We have made some progress, I believe, in placing the student into a program which challenges his abilities whether he is strong, average, or marginal. There are two basic sequences in French and Spanish in the High School which we refer to as A and B. Each sequence has two tracks. One is honors and the other standard. Sequence A is for students who intend to study a foreign language in the 6th through 12th grade and sequence B for students who pursue the study of a foreign language in the 9th through 12th grade. In addition, when enrollment permits we provide a three-year course for marginal students. The pace is slower, the classes smaller, and the teacher and materials are geared to the specific needs of the individual. The advanced placement courses for seniors of exceptional ability have proven most successful.

The program may seem too proliferated, yet we have been able to cut down on the failure incidence and to increase the staying powers of many students. Although students generally may not continue to the third-year high school level unless they receive a grade of "C" or higher, those not qualified are encouraged to continue by repeating the second-year level or by going to summer school. We provide mobility vertical and horizontal - track to track. Close liaison with the teachers of the junior high and all the deans enable us to make advisable changes in an individual's program.

This year we have moved into a Foreign Language Center. It is open before, during, and after school. There is a laboratory, a seminar room, a reference library, individual conference areas, and work space. Teachers and a teacher-aide with a language background are available for supplemental and remedial work. We shall soon begin to experiment with some self-instructional programs.

Professor Lado has stated that we now have the tools and the knowledge to develop highly effective tests for overall control of a foreign language. Now that we have gone on record as encouraging an early study of a foreign language there is certainly a responsibility to it that barriers to the continuation of language study through the 12th grade be removed.

Pimsleur - "rather than drop the low-aptitude, underachieving student, the schools should discover how to give him <u>rewarding</u> foreign language experience."

FLES: A SENSIBLE APPROACH

Sidney L. Teitelbaum

FLES for many elementary school educators is a program unto itself...a language program which begins and ends in the elementary school.

FLES for many secondary school educators is a program of songs and games and all that time-wasting nonsense. But, it cannot do too much harm, they say, because the students will start Book I anyway when they enter the secondary school.

This division is not unique to the foreign language program. It is true, unfortunately, in almost every discipline.

However, no other discipline is so dependent on direct continuity as is the study of foreign languages.

To compound the felony in FLES philosophy, it is common practice to apply pre-determined discrimination in selecting students for FLES. In this age of hasty decisions based upon examinations whose only virtue is that they can be graded hastily, we have decided that only the students scoring in the gifted category in a reading and writing examination can embark upon the study of a language which stresses oral comprehension and speech. Hence, we base our scores on oranges to screen out the lemons.

The result of MLA research cannot be repeated often enough: There is no inevitable correlation between high I.Q. and language aptitude. For example, there may be greater language readiness among pupils who have had foreign language experience in their homes whether or not they happen to have a high I.Q. Some teachers have also reported a correlation between musical and language aptitudes. Pointing out that in the past knowledge of other languages, particularly French, has been associated with the socially elect, as one of the graceful accomplishments of those who move about the world, they contend that this is not the time for any continuation of the possible snob appeal of foreign language experience, such as might be encouraged by the selective procedure.

It is important that the gifted among our school children receive greater attention and encouragement, but this should be done from the broad base of total participation. Everyone should be given the opportunity of beginning the study of language, and the principle of enrichment rather than selectivity should be used progressively. There is the possibility in this connection of making a distinction after a number of years of language experience between the more gifted and those who enjoy their language and profit from it, but fail to accomplish as much as the more

gifted. The less gifted are still capable of getting both pleasure and profit from their language experience. They could continue what would be called conversational French or Spanish, while the second group would pursue a course of study which is more firmly grounded in grammar and more challenging in cultural content.

We must remember that in addition to the direct objective of learning a foreign language there is the indirect but even more important objective of learning to understand and appreciate a foreign people and their culture. This objective can be as readily achieved by slow learners as by fast ones and is equally important for both. Foreign language study arouses as much enthusiasm as any other subject. In addition, language experience has often provided to be more beneficial to the slow learner than to the fast, for the former has often found success in language, which has encouraged him to renew his efforts in all subjects. Language has therefore not infrequently been the means of salvaging the poorest pupils, who would under the principle of selectivity not have a chance. The better case can then be made for giving all pupils an opportunity for language experience.

A sensible FLES program calls for a long, continuous, spiraling foreign language program in each district which begins early in the elementary school and proceeds without interruption through the high school. Whichever program we select, it must be a single language program based upon a single specific set of materials. To achieve this goal, I recommend that if you are satisfied with your secondary school program, you take Level I of that program and bring it as far down in the grades as you can find good teachers to teach the program.

Teach that Level I slowly, carefully, thoroughly, and lovingly. Add songs, games, animations, but stick to the language development as closely as you can. Above all, get the best possible teachers for this level. Steal them, if you must. But, get the best.

Take your time with Level I - it is the most important level of your entire program - whatever your program might be.

Two qualifications, though:

1. Teach language to all the children, for the first two years, at least. Let's stop building this Tower of Babel where only the top students have an opportunity to be confused. Let's stop falling prey to the time-dishonored belief that only the select few can learn a language - what Stendhal sarcastically calls "The Happy Few."

2. Withhold the printed word as long as possible. Teach the language audio-lingually, but teach it thoroughly. Teach the

> children to roll those r's and lilt those l's. You have the time! Teach the children. You have the audience! Don't sell the students short with the usual high school teacher's lament that you have to cover material. This is true on the high school level but false on the elementary level.

All current research, from Wilder Penfield to Art Linkletter, has demonstrated that the younger the child, the more faithfully does he imitate. Children are natural mimics. As parents, we know that they act like us in spite of every attempt to teach them good manners.

In 1964, I was on the National FLES Committee for the AATF. My job was to conduct a survey of FLES programs in the country. I learned that, after finances, the most prevalent reason for the discontinuance of FLES programs was the statement by secondary school teachers, administrators, students, and parents that students had learned nothing in FLES. And how was this nothing measured? It was measured by their knowledge of the foreign language based upon the secondary school language program. In essence, this meant that if the students had, let us say, Parlons Français for three years, they were expected to do at least Level II work of Ecouter et Parler or A-LM. This is nonsense!

Of course, they learned some language. But that something from one program cannot be measured with or compared to a specific structured approach of another program. The dialogs are different, the arrangement is different, the approach and content of the drills are different.

Thus, I was led in my own District of East Meadow to a logical, sensible approach, that is:

1. teach language to <u>all</u> children on the FLES level and
2. base all language study on the same language materials.

QUESTIONS

Space limitation permits only a few of the interesting questions that were asked.

To Professor Carroll:

Question: Since basic foreign language learning is probably an inborn ability, does not that ability deteriorate with age, as do other abilities, such as sight, etc.?

Answer: Yes, there is probably somewhat of a decline that does not appear until about age 40 or 50, when there's more difficulty in remembering vocabulary, and so on.... This should not be overestimated. A lot of people who took up the study of a foreign language at an advanced age were quite successful at it.

Question: Can testing determine whether a youngster has more language aptitude for one foreign language in preference to another?

Answer: My research would indicate that, in general, language aptitude is the same regardless of what language you are speaking about. There are some exceptions to this, possibly. For example, if you are talking about learning Chinese, and learning the written aspects of Chinese, there may be some evidence that it takes certain special abilities to be very quick in learning the characters in the writing system of the Chinese language. But, by and large, learning a language audio-lingually depends on the same aptitudes, regardless of what language it is.

To Mr. Benardo:

Question: Why must students who fail Level I the first half be promoted to the second half merely because they are first-term students and they cannot be held back? Many of these students could achieve some degree of success if they were allowed to repeat the subject with a slower group.

Answer: Nobody has ordered anybody to allow pupils to continue if they fail. What we have tried to suggest in the intermediate school is that we wait a year, the initial year, before dropping pupils from the foreign language

program. Some principals have asked for a six-month dispensation....By and large it is only fair to allow a pupil one year of instruction before we rule him out altogether from the foreign language program. When a child is new in the junior high school, he is making an adjustment to the school itself. There are many other problems involved. Therefore it would seem to us that it would be wise to give him a year of instruction before making a determination as to whether or not he ought to continue with the language.

Question: Why is it that a child needs four years in a junior high school to learn Level I, yet the same pupil will be expected to learn Level II in one year and Level III in one year in the senior high school?

Answer: What learning a level means I do not know. If learning simply means presentation of material so that one can complete the scope of structures and vocabulary, then this is not my idea of learning at all. I'm not so sure that you can do Level II in one year. And I'm not so sure that what we mean by Level I now ought to be what we always mean by Level I. If you take the total structures and vocabulary in Level I and insist that they be mastered for active use, this takes an enormous amount of time, and it's worthwhile time (applause). It is not wasted time at all. We have been fooling the public about what our kids can do in foreign language. No, they can't talk at the end of the junior high school period, and many of them can't talk or understand much at the end of the third or fourth level sequence either. What we need is far more time and we must be more honest about it. Those four years with a very solid Level I, including reading and writing activities - there is a place for heavy reading and writing activity in that four-year program - will develop a youngster who is successful and who likes it and wants to go on to the senior high school, which now maybe will not tell the child "You didn't learn a thing where you came from."

To Mr. Shores:

Question: Do you permit students to repeat a level in foreign language instruction even though they have received a poor but passing grade?

Answer: The answer is yes.

To Sister Eileen Marie:

Question: How would you cope with the problem of the student who refuses to continue after two years of a foreign language, asserting that colleges require only two years for admission?

Answer: Perhaps I would find out if the motivation that is lacking there is caused by the teacher who does not offer enough enthusiastic approach to the foreign language and who cannot keep the students interested in continuing with the language.